

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1.(Currently Amended) A method of thawing pieces of meat frozen in meat blocks, comprising providing an apparatus for initial separation of the pieces frozen in the meat block before the meat block is placed in a rotating container, using the apparatus for applying pressure to the meat block (1) before the meat block is treated in the rotating container (7), for initiating a thawing of the meat block and a separation ~~process~~ of the meat block (1) into individual pieces (2); placing the treated meat block and any separated individual pieces into the rotating container; and, rotating the container for completing the separation of the meat block into individual pieces and for completing the thawing of the separated pieces of meat.

2.(Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the pressure is applied over diagonals of the meat block (1).

3.(Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 further comprising, after applying pressure to the meat block, removing a package from the meat block before the meat block (1) is placed in the rotating container (7).

4.(Withdrawn-Currently Amended) An apparatus for performing a method of thawing pieces of meat frozen in meat blocks, the apparatus performing an initial separation of the meat block before the meat block is placed in a rotating container, the apparatus comprising a number of pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) which either cooperate in pairs or cooperate with a firm opposite face for applying pressure to the meat block (1) in an amount sufficient to initiate thawing of individual pieces of meat forming the meat block and for initiating displacement of the individual pieces relative to each other for initiating separation of the pieces from the meat block.

5.(Withdrawn-Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 4 wherein the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) have planar faces facing toward the meat block (1).

6.(Withdrawn-Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 4 wherein the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) have faces having elevations or depressions facing toward the meat block (1).

7.(Withdrawn-Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 4 wherein the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) have an outwardly inclined elevation in at least one corner facing toward the meat block (1).

8.(Withdrawn-Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 4 wherein the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) have depressions to receive corners of the meat block (1) facing toward the meat block (1).

9.(Withdrawn-Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 4 wherein the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) are positioned for applying the pressure to the meat block (1) over a diagonal or diagonals of the meat block (1).

10.(Withdrawn-Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 4 further comprising means for detecting and/or removing pieces of metal.

11.(Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the apparatus comprises a number of pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) which either cooperate in pairs or cooperate with a firm opposite face for applying the pressure to the meat block (1) placed therebetween.

12.(Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 further comprising providing the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) with planar faces which face towards the meat block (1).

13.(Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 further comprising providing the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) with faces having elevations or depressions facing toward the meat block (1).

14.(Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 further comprising providing the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) with an outwardly inclined elevation in at least one corner facing toward the meat block (1).

15.(Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 further comprising providing the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) with depressions facing towards the meat block (1) for receiving corners of the meat block (1) therein.

16.(Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 further comprising positioning the pistons (3, 4, 5, 6) for applying the pressure to the meat block (1) over a diagonal or diagonals of the meat block (1).

17.(Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 further comprising providing means for detecting metal, and, using the detecting means on the meat block or the individual pieces to detect whether any metal is contained therein.